

Pennsylvania Railroad Station
Saltsburg
Indiana County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5437

HABS
PA,
32-SALT,
10-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD STATION

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- Location: Point Street and the railroad tracks, Saltsburg, Conemaugh Township, Indiana County, Pennsylvania.
- Present Owner: Borough of Saltsburg.
- Present Use: Town offices, police station, warehouse.
- Significance: This building, constructed between 1856 and 1864, served as the first railway depot in Saltsburg. Erected by local stone mason John Martin and S.S. Jamison for the Northwestern Pennsylvania Railroad Company, it served until the 1880s when the line was acquired by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company and the tracks relocated.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1856-64. The 1856 Peelor map of Saltsburg indicates a "R.R. Depot" of similar proportion at this site, however the sequence of ownership and identification of parcels is sometimes unclear.
2. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands, historically lot No. 58. Reference is to the Recorder of Deeds Office of the County of Indiana, Pennsylvania.

1856 Deed June 21, 1856, Volume 27, Page 404.
John and Margaret Guthrie
TO
Northwestern Pennsylvania Railroad Company

1860 Purchase by Western Pennsylvania Railroad Company.

1882 Purchase by Pennsylvania Railroad Company.

3. Builder: John Martin, stone mason; Samuel S. Jamison, contractor.
 4. Alterations and additions: In 1950, a one-story brick gable-front block with enclosed frame vestibule were appended to the front facade in a telescoping arrangement. This obscured a three-bay, gable-front facade with central doorway.
- B. Historical Context: This first railroad depot was built by Saltsburg stone mason John Martin (born 1820), who was hired to construct the Northwestern Pennsylvania Railroad Company's stations between Blairsville and Avonmore. Martin emigrated in 1834 with his family from Ireland, and settled in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. His career included work on the Sandy and Beaver canals, an apprenticeship in the stone-cutting trade with Pagan and Company of Pittsburgh, and bridge construction. He arrived in Saltsburg in the early 1840s and served for six years as a foreman mason on the Northwestern Pennsylvania line. In Saltsburg, Martin was responsible for several notable buildings, including the Soldier's Monument in Edgewood Cemetery, St. Matthew's Catholic Church and the Academy, as well as this depot. He was treasurer of the Saltsburg Bridge Company, vice president of the cemetery organization, and a borough council member. Martin's stone-cutting yard was on Point Street just east of the canal (Arms and White, 383, 391).

Martin was contracted to do the work by Samuel Jamison (1797-1877), who initially moved to Saltsburg to work on construction of the Pennsylvania Canal; he remained there for the rest of his life. From 1829 until 1847 Jamison served as supervisor of the western extension of the canal--approximately half the Western Division route. Also, he was the contractor for numerous building projects in and around Saltsburg, including the bridge over the Kiskiminetas River. When the railroad usurped the canal, Jamison was involved in contracting out its structures, such as the train station. Jamison achieved considerable political success, no doubt due to his powerful position, for he was the only Saltsburger elected to the state senate, a post he held from 1854-56.

Jamison's private fortune fluctuated with that of the railroad. In 1860 the Northwestern Pennsylvania Railroad sold the line to the Western Pennsylvania Railroad, which subsequently went bankrupt. Jamison's finances were tied up in the company, and in 1859 he was forced to sell his farmhouse to pay off debts resulting from this venture. In 1882 the Western Pennsylvania Railroad was acquired by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, the tracks relocated from below High Street to the old canal right of way--and a new depot was built in 1884 on Washington Street (Stewart, 504).

The old Northwestern Pennsylvania Railroad station has served as a town hall (at least 1886-1927) for cultural and athletic events, and as a bowling alley (1950-78) since retirement as a depot; a 1978 fire caused some damage to the structure, and additions to the front facade have further altered its appearance. The building currently houses the police department and the borough council.

For additional context, twenty-one reports on other buildings in Saltsburg may be consulted, as well as overview histories of the town of Saltsburg (HABS No. PA-5438) and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666). See also, Sara Amy Leach, ed., Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg (Washington, DC: Historica American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building embodies the basic railroad-station form: simple rectangular plan, one-story, low-pitch gable roof with exaggerated eaves supported by large wood brackets, logically situated lengthwise adjacent to the train tracks.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 88'-6" x 28'-6" prior to modern additions.
2. Foundation: Stone and perhaps some brick.
3. Walls: Brick laid in four- and five-course American bond; the addition is running bond and frame.
4. Structural system: Load-bearing masonry, frame.
5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys with chimney pots.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The historic north facade has been

eradicated by a modern addition that features a single, central door; the original contained a central double door with five-light transom. The east facade--that facing the tracks-- features a boarded-up service door topped by a stone lintel. The west facade features a single door with three-light transom, and a Classically molded lintel. The one-bay south facade contains a single, broad service door with a brick, segmental-arched surround.

- b. Windows and shutters: The fenestration pattern is irregular, and the use of the various openings is unclear. The north facade historically featured a window on each side of a central doorway. This has been replaced by a fixed, multi-light glass-block window. The east elevation contains a trio of six-over-six-light, double-hung wood sash at the north end of the building; at the south end is a single, arched opening covered by paneled wood shutters. The west elevation is very irregular, with an arrangement of the same six-over-six-light sash and two arched opening with brick surrounds.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Low-pitch gable with asphalt shingles.
 - b. Eaves: Wide, 5' eaves supported by oversized wood brackets.
- C. Description of Interior: The interior of the historic station is currently a single room, used for storage. The modern front addition is also a single room occupied by the police department.
- D. Site: This former railroad station stands relatively isolated, facing north on a long, flat site, at the point where the grade ascends steeply up to High Street. The building is bounded on the east by the route of the former railroad tracks, and on the west and north across Point Street by fully developed town blocks.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old Views and maps:

The collection of the Saltsburg Branch, Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana County, Stone House Museum, contains numerous historical images.

Beers, F.W. Atlas of Indiana County. New York: F.W. Beers and Co., 1871.

Johnson, George B., and Palmer, Ann. Saltsburg--The Way It Was--An Appreciation. Indiana, Pa.: A.G. Halldin Publishing Co., 1986.

Peelor, David, and Barker, W. "Map of Indiana County, Pennsylvania." North Hector, New York: 1856.

"Saltsburg, Pa." New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Co. Ltd., February 1886; New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Ltd., October 1891, January 1897, July 1903; New York: Sanborn Map Company, April 1909, February 1927.

B. Primary and unpublished sources:

Indiana County, Pennsylvania, deed books and tax records.

C. Secondary and published sources:

Arms, C.T., and White, E. 1745-1880, History of Indiana County, Pennsylvania. Newark, Ohio: J. A. Caldwell, 1880.

Berringer, Gloria, ed. Canal Days Sesquicentennial: 1838-1988. No publisher, 1988.

Biographical and Historical Cyclopedia of Indiana and Armstrong Counties. Philadelphia: John M. Gresham and Co., 1891; reprinted 1982.

Johnson, George. Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal. Historic Saltsburg, 1984.

McCullough, Robert, and Leuba, Walter. The Pennsylvania Main Line Canal. York, Pa.: American Canal and Transportation Center, 1973.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory, "Western Division of the Pennsylvania Canal: Indiana and Westmoreland Counties." 1979/82.

Stewart, J.T. Indiana County, Pennsylvania: Her People, Past and Present. Chicago: F.W. Beers and Co., 1913.

Wallner, Peter A. "Politics and Public Works: A Study of the Pennsylvania Canal System, 1825-1857." Ph.D diss., Pennsylvania State University, June 1973.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was conducted by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record in cooperation with the America's Industrial Heritage Project under the directorship of Randy Cooley; AIHP is an undertaking of the National Park Service, based in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. Recorded under the direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, the project was completed during summer 1988 at the HABS field office in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Project leader was Alison K. Hoagland, senior HABS historian; field supervisor was Dorothy Burlingame, University of Vermont; project historian, Kristin Belz, University of Virginia. Large-format photography is by David Ames. Editing of the final report was done by Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

This report was completed as part of a larger project documenting two canal towns--Saltsburg, on the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal, and Alexandria, on the Juniata Division--flanking the Allegheny Divide. Twenty-one reports on other buildings in Saltsburg, an overview history of Saltsburg (HABS No. PA-5438), and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666) are part of the HABS/HAER collection. Twenty-two reports on buildings in Alexandria (Huntingdon County) and an overview history of Alexandria (HABS No. PA-5407) are also available. Results of the project were published as Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg, Sara Amy Leach, editor (Washington, DC: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989).